



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 01

JANUARY 2015

DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dreams “To create an ideal village” --Sadhna Kumari

Bihar: My name is Sadhna Kumari. I am 13-year-old. I am from most vulnerable community and I live in Babuan(Bihar).I have been associated with Apne Aap since 2009, when Koshi flood came in Bihar. I joined as a Kishori Mandal member and enrolled in Apne Aap's sewing and tuition class.

Being part of the group has helped me to gain knowledge on my legal rights and different policies, which I was not aware of. I am now aware of my fundamentals rights and takes particular interest in understanding gender discrimination, violence against women and laws that are there to provide us protection.

I was aged 9, when flood water rushed in Bihar from Koshi River. During the flood, all of us were extremely dejected and disappointed in my village.

That was a moment of desperation and hopelessness, as our village was disconnected completely. The road was washed away. No electricity. Shortage of food. Then, Apne Aap extended help to us and fought for our basic needs.

One year ago, Kishori Mandal girls took initiative with the help of Apne Aap and some elder members of my village to file an application to D.M (District Magistrate) and DEO (District education Officer) for High school in my village.

I am glad our demand was considered and this year the school will be inaugurated.

I dream, one day my place become an ideal village in our district and all the facilities would be available to be prepare for any kind of natural calamities.

Silent march demanding police action against the murder of a prostituted woman —Keya/ as dictated to Sudipta Dasgupta

Kolkata: My name is Sabina Bibi and I am known to others as Keya. I am 23-year-old. I am staying in Sonagachi since 10 years. Currently, I am associated with Apne Aap women Worldwide as a teacher for primary students.

I have a son. His name is S K. Raj. He is a brilliant student. I feel really proud by looking at his exam result. He is studying in standard VI in Ram Krishna Vivekananda Mission, Barrackpore. Here I would like to share my experience of standing against violence.

Living in Sonagachi red light area, I am used to seeing aggressive attitudes of male. They beat up women, use violence against them, and abuse them using the most degrading words possible.

The lives of prostitutes are very short. They die of diseases, depressions or violence. But there is barely anyone to identify or mourn after their death.

But, on January 20, 2015 Apne Aap Women Worldwide organized a candle light vigil in Sonagachi red light area to demand proper police investigation for a murdered prostitute. Her name was Sathi Das. She was killed on January 10, 2015 allegedly by one of her customer.

Her room was at the second floor of the same building, where Apne Aap's centre office is located.

(Continued on page 6)

Attending India Art Fair 2015 —Sanjana/ as translated by Jasneet Kaur

Delhi: My name is Sanjana. I am 15-year-old. I live in the Sapera Basti in Dharampura. I have been a part of the Apne Aap network since four years.

I, along with 14 girls and women from Sapera and Perna community participated in the India Art Fair on Sunday, Feb 1, 2015. We took the train and reached the venue near Govindpuri Metro Station with Mamta didi and Shashi didi. We saw sculptures of five female armless bodies, displayed in one corner. We were very curious to know what it means. Then Jasneet didi introduced us to Janine didi, who had made the sculptures filled with different colors of hair. She had

explained the relevance of the armless sculptures.

We all were very amused by the sculptures. The sculptures spread a message to everyone to resist violence and anything bad happening to a girl. We all performed with the sculptures and took away a packet which contained a strand of hair from the sculpture. Most of us liked the golden colored hair sculpture.

Then, we invited other people to come and interact with the sculptures. We explained them the significance and the message of the sculptures.

(Continued on page 7)

Apne Aap's rescue operation telecasted in Public Broadcasting Service (PBS): Police inaction hampers human trafficking crackdown in India

Special correspondent Fred de Sam Lazaro traveled to India recently to take a closer look at the issue and the often unsuccessful efforts to combat the practice.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: There was an unusual demonstration recently in this small town near India's border of India, Nepal, unusual because these women, most with backgrounds in prostitution, are rarely seen in public. They protested social evils, from gender bias to the caste system, India's age-old social ladder in which they're at the very bottom.

RUCHIRA GUPTA, Apne Aap Women Worldwide: In Bombay, in Delhi, in Calcutta, whichever red light area you go to, the girls and women are all low caste. Prostitution is passed on from mother to daughter and pimping from father to son.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Ruchira Gupta is a former journalist who started a group called Apne Aap, or On Our Own, which organized the rally. The group has rescued many of these women, found them new work in crafts and micro-enterprises, and put their daughters in school.

Apne Aap was also part of a protest movement that followed the fatal gang rape of a Delhi college student two years ago, a campaign that got lawmakers to act against what many called a culture of rape and misogyny.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: The law was changed to penalize traffickers, instead of the women they traffic, recognizing the women as victims.

RUCHIRA GUPTA: And it also said beautifully that the consent of a victim to her own exploitation will still put the blame on the perpetrator who used her consent to traffic her.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: The court ordered that citizen committees be set up in every community in this region. These committees would gather data on every child up to 18 years old in these communities and essentially keep tabs on the welfare of these children, all this to ensure that no child is trafficked.

RUCHIRA GUPTA: When I started work here eight years ago, women could not look up. They used to cover their head and they were terrified of the traffickers beating them up. And now, with the Patna high court judgment, they feel they can change the whole system and eradicate trafficking from the roots.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Laws are only as good as their enforcement, however, as we would see just hours after the rally.

Ruchira Gupta and a couple of Apne Aap staffers have come to this police station inside that is just inside India along the Nepal border. They have learned that there are at least two young women who have been trafficked and they're making final arrangements with the police to conduct a raid tonight to try and rescue them.

The team met up with the police at 6:00 p.m. They hadn't told the police beforehand where they were going, for fear the traffickers would be tipped off. But once they shared that information, they were asked to wait, because the female officers who were to accompany them had been delayed.

When the women still hadn't arrived two hours later, the raid proceeded anyway, hours after the planned start, three women from Apne Aap and six policemen.

RUCHIRA GUPTA: This will be the front room where the

customers are brought in.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: A few minutes later, they were in the local red light area and in a three-room hovel, where they suspected one young woman was being held. It was dank, dark and deserted.

Ruchira, what's going on?

RUCHIRA GUPTA: I think the girls have been (INAUDIBLE) when we were kept waiting at the police station for two hours.

We suspect that they sent the information to the traffickers here, because, as you can see, there's not a man in sight, which is very unusual in the red light area. But where are the pimps? Where are the customers? Where have they all gone? It's very, very odd.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Same thing a few yards away next door, a deserted home, evidence that this too was a brothel whose occupants had left in a hurry.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Further in the courtyard, a door was padlocked on the outside of another home used as a brothel.

The police were armed with big rifle, but they had no means to break the lock open. The task fell finally to a man said to be related to the building owner. Gupta suspected the occupants fled over the wall in the back when they heard the group arriving in the front, and she mildly admonished the policemen.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: An officer duly followed Gupta, but didn't record anything.

With the lock finally broken, they found a framed picture of one of the young women they were looking for. The man who let them in initially denied knowing her, but then relented and said he knew where she was being held.

The police ordered him to produce her in one hour at the police station.

So he's gone off to bring the girl, ostensibly.

RUCHIRA GUPTA: Yes.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Do you think you will see her this evening?

RUCHIRA GUPTA: We're at the mercy of the cops, because if the cops want, we will see her. If the cops don't want, we won't see her.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Back at the police station, I asked supervisor Ajit Kumar Singh the obvious question.

The suspicion immediately is that somebody, maybe from your own police force, has tipped them off.

He was more comfortable in Hindi, less comfortable with the question. He said he didn't have enough information, but promised to investigate. The young woman never showed up at the station, but the female police officers finally did, too late to have any effective role in the attempted rescue. There were no police vehicles available to get here from their base at another station, they complained.

RUCHIRA GUPTA: I am once again reminded why slavery still exists, because the laws are on paper and they are never implemented. And this is like — is back to ground zero, where I realize that the police, come what may, do not want to implement the laws on behalf of women and girls.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: She says part of the job of activists is to educate an ill-informed, often ill-trained police force on the laws and then hold them accountable.

Diary of a Social Worker

Sahana Dasgupta

Kolkata: My name is Sahana Dasgupta. I had completed my education as an M.A in Bengali from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. I started my career as a research associate in Jadavpur University. Meanwhile, I got involved as a volunteer in various activities, to address the social causes in different organization. During my job tenure in Ananda Bazar Patrika, I was involved in research activities and later, I decided to work actively in the developmental sector for the betterment of at risks and vulnerable to prostitution people.

Since 2003, I am associated with Apne Aap Women Worldwide. I work for the extremely marginalized women, stigmatized as “prostitutes” by the society, and have been effective with the survivors of the prostitution and the children of the prostituted women in Munshiganj and Sonagachi red light areas, Kolkata.

Initially, my role was to mobilize the activities in Topasia and Munshiganj. Those were the days when we had to face frequent problems from the pimps and the brothel owners. We were prevented from visiting the area. The pimps warned and threatened us to not visit the area. But this did not deter me and my zeal to help the women.

Eventually, our relentless efforts of approaching people were fruitful, as we develop a healthy relationship with the women and the landlord. Sonagachi is the largest red light area in Asia and I believe that creating a space for ourselves here is a commendable achievement.

For the last twelve years, I am working at Apne Aap with survivors of trafficking and prostitution. I work on forming women’s groups in their own communities and to ensure admission of the children of women in

prostitution in different residential schools within Kolkata and beyond.

Even after so many years in the profession, I, strongly feel that there is lot more to do for the women and the children. I am always considering different ways on how to approach more women and community, to understand their problems and difficulties in life and would be keen to show them how they can overcome with the hindrances.

We all should know our constitutional rights, and so the women in prostitution. Accordingly, they can claim their rights from the society and government. They have to overcome all the barriers and will establish a place for themselves in the society. Their children will get proper education and job opportunities too. This would affirm their citizenship in the country.

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Did You Know?

In India:

- There are 2.3 million women and girls in prostitution
- A quarter of 2.3 million are under the age of 18
- There are 1,000 red-light areas

Globally:

- About 58 % of all cases of trafficking detected globally are purpose of sexual exploitation
- About 75 % of all trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls
- About 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold for commercial exploitation
- About 1 in 10 men in the world have bought commercial sex

An unforgettable experience of facing camera

—*Piya Paswan / as translated by Sahana Dasgupta*

Kolkata: My name is Piya Paswan. I live in Munshiganj red light area. I am 14-year-old and I have been coming to Apne Aap centre to participate in different kind of activities.

With Apne Aap's help I get the essential exposure to learn something new at every level. I like watching movies. I had also watched Hollywood movie Slumdog Millionaire and I was saddened to see how little children were exploited in different cities across the country.

When I heard that the director of Slumdog Millionaire was visiting Apne Aap. I was really excited. I wanted to meet the person behind the success of that movie. But, later we received good news that the director would be selecting 6 girls to show and teach about on how films are shot. We were going to the set, where they are shooting for his upcoming movie.

I, along with five other girls named Ruby, Radha, Anjali, Kajol and Jyoti were selected for the film shooting.

One morning, Uma didi took us to Bagbazar, the place where film shooting was taking place. We sat there the whole day. We were provided breakfast and lunch. In afternoon, at about 3.30pm, they called us in the green room and we had our makeup on. By 4.30 pm we were ushered to the studio.

I was amazed to notice the glittering and how everything was so organized. On the set, there were different scenes for all the actors. It was just like a dream. There was light, camera, and many people doing different types of work.

Initially, the set and people overwhelmed me. I was terrified and was nervous in front of the camera. But, the director helped me to overcome my fear and taught us how to act naturally in front of the camera.

It was an excellent lifetime experience for us. We have learnt many things from them. It boosted my confidence to speak in public space. On that day, we left the studio by 6 pm and left for home after removing our makeup. I will never forget this experience.

After returning to Kidderpore, I explained our experience to each of our friend and family members and also to the staffs of Apne Aap. For some days, we could not think of anything except the film shooting.

Now I am dreaming to go for a higher education and enroll myself in a film institute, where I want to hone my acting skill, to become a successful actress in Bollywood.

Get yourself involved!

Be a part of the campaign!

Click a selfie and share it with us on the Facebook Page 'Cool Men Don't Buy Sex' <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cool-Men-Dont-Buy-Sex/624526271001934> with #CoolMenDontBuySex #Selfie #ApneAap.

The Cool Men Don't Buy Sex Campaign is a call to end demand for sex trafficking which highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry.



Apne Aap's "Cool Men Don't Buy Sex" campaign was born to draw attention to the demand side of sex trafficking - the traffickers, pimps, and purchasers of sex. Apne Aap advocates for the criminalization of these individuals – they are responsible for maintaining sexual slavery and continue to exploit women and girls every day in India.

Proud to be NIIT certified student**—Sweeti Kumari/ as transalted by Bhawna**

Bihar: I am Sweeti Kumari. I did my Diploma in Computer Applications from Apne Aap Women Worldwide under the aegis of NIIT Computer Institute. During the first day of my computer class I was quite nervous and hesitant. I had no idea that the going would be so easy. In spite of a relatively new domain, I remained focused during the duration of my course.

I came to Apne Aap with the hope of gathering knowledge from the IT Education pioneer. The faculty was good and provided ample information regarding the subjects and cleared my doubts or obstacles that came my way.

The environment was friendly and cheerful and there was a challenging atmosphere. Today, I am happy to say that Apne Aap kept its word. In simple words, “hats off” to the effort Apne Aap is putting in.

The grooming sessions were really helpful and provided the edge I needed to battle the nervousness, as I was from an entirely different educational background. The training schedule molded me to suit the current IT employment scenario. We had rigorous technical and non-technical mock-sessions to improve our skills.

Apne Aap was there in every step of my journey and provided me the intellect that was immensely required

to secure not a good, but a ‘great’ career. I can never forget the immense time and care they have taken in providing me with help at every step.

Finally, I am truly grateful to Bhawana didi for helping us get the NIIT certificate for which I was waiting anxiously for a long time.

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contact@apneaap.org**



The World Outside

“A trip to Jaipur Literature Festival 2015”

— Manish Kumar/as translated by Garima Bastola

Delhi: My name is Manish and I am a driver at Apne Aap. I have learnt a great deal since I came to be a part of the organization. My perspective towards social issues has undergone drastic change since I started working here. I have made few observations about people here in Delhi. Firstly there are women who walk hand in hand with men; secondly there are some men who are opposed to the idea of a working women; thirdly, women have become victim of notorious activities like sexual harassment. I dislike such double standards maintained by people in this society.

After my association with Apne Aap Worldwide I have started making a conscious effort to stand up for the right thing. I have come to believe that together we can end disparity between men and women. We can do that by empowering women in order for them to gain self respect for themselves. Secondly, by educating the young generation that “gender discrimination is wrong”.

Since 2002 Apne Aap World Wide started a world wide campaign to end sex trafficking.

I travelled to Jaipur to promote a book titled Priya's Shakti in the Jaipur Literature Festival 2015. This step

has made our intention to end violence against women even stronger. It is a comic book based on a gangrape survivor, who was shamed and shunned by the society. But, she returns to her home, sitting on a tiger and asks people to “speak without shame” The event took place in Diggi Palace Jaipur starting 20- 25 January 2015.

Large number of students along with local public participated in this event. The founder of Apne Aap Ms. Ruchira Gupta spoke during the event.

There were many stalls of books. The festival was attended by many politicians, bureaucrats, well known Bollywood stars, media personnel and book lovers. In evening, there were musical concerts. I got the chance to visit Jaipur City Palace. The memory is still fresh in my mind. I shall cherish it forever.

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Continued from page 1

She was 24-year-old, trafficked to Sonagachi. She came in associating with Apne Aap recently, first as a supportive partner, and later as a beneficiary. She used to come to the center every day in the afternoon, used to spend time with us for a long time. **She expressed her wish to exit prostitution and was already on the process of finding a different identity, a more “dignified” one.**

Also, she had auditioned for a role in Bengali serial and was selected for a very small role in it. She decided on her own to take this step. By nature, she was a jovial and fun loving person, with a fighting spirit and very helpful too in organizing different activities and events.

Before taking out the silent march, I and my team mobilized 50 women from both Munshiganj and Sonagachi redlight areas. Even media personnel were present there to cover vigil.

Some posters of the slogans used during the silent march:

--Sathi had a dream to exit prostitution.

--No more murder in Sonagachi!

--Your silence encourages violence and assists the criminals

-- Am I the next?

I feel privileged and pained to talk about her and the unfortunate murder. Her murderer should be punished. God has not given right to kill or harm anyone and I strongly demand that police should expedite the investigation and punish the culprit.

It was an overwhelming experience for me, especially to be able to speak against violence of any kind, that too in the middle of this locality, where every day girls and women face harassment.

**--Sathi had a dream to exit prostitution.
--No more murder in Sonagachi!
--Your silence encourages violence and assists the criminals
-- Am I the next?**

My First Day at Apne Aap

—*Mallika Bhalla/as dictated to Sangeeta*

Kolkata: My name is Mallika. I am 28-year-old and I live in Sonagachi area (Kolkata). Here, the scenario here is very different from the world outside. There are brothels, shops, women wearing revealing clothes and standing for the customers. There are drunken men almost in almost every nook and corner. We witness them misbehaving with women

I grew up in this area. I barely receive any financial assistance from my family. And when I got the opportunity to work with Apne Aap, it was a dream come true moment for me.

I always wanted a place where I could invest my time and effort. I fear that if I am not doing anything, then the possibility is that I might get into prostitution, which I do not want to.

I became a part of Apne Aap Women Worldwide extended family on December 1, 2014

On my first day in Apne Aap, I was really excited and bit nervous too. I reached the Hasting office at about 9 am. Later, when the staffs started coming in, I introduced myself and they were very sweet towards me.

They told me about my job description at workplace and the daily activities which I have to carry out.

Later on that day, Hindol da took me to Shashtitala office, where I met and interacted with other staff members. There, I also met IGP teacher named Lila di and I told her that I want to join IGP unit to learn livelihood skills training on how to make jute bags, stitching etc.

She enrolled my name the same day itself and asked

me to join from the next day. **I was overwhelmed. It gave me whole new opportunity by involving myself in a skills training classes and being able to work with the organisation too. It is a whole new beginning for. I dream of leaving the red light area and take my family somewhere else.**

This job empowered me in a way. Now I can financially support my ailing family and is far more dignified than getting into prostitution

I can never forget this day of my life. Every day I learn something new in the office.

I can proudly say that I am more confident today than yesterday. Also, every passing day motivates me to talk to girls and women in my locality and other community to quit prostitution.

Thanks to Apne Aap for changing my life meaningfully.

I can proudly say that I am more confident today than yesterday. Also, every passing day motivates me to talk to girls and women in my locality and other community to quit prostitution.

Continued from page 1

When asked why they sculptures are armless, we were able explain the art-goer that they are examples of millions of girls and women across the globe, who are helpless even in the face of violence against them. There are girls who are trafficked into prostitution. Beaten, harassed, abused but the society fails to stand for their fundamental rights.

I feel proud to be able to stand for some good cause, as, the neighborhood, where I live in, has an unsafe surrounding. Most of the male are always drunk and create ruckus around. Certain girls feel extremely vulnerable to live there.

Some people did not want to touch the sculpture because they thought it was real hair. But most of the visitors really liked it and were clicking photographs. We also got a lot of pictures clicked.

We went and saw the entire Art Fair. We could not understand a lot of things, but they were very beautifully

designed. Then we had lunch at the canteen. When we were about to go back in the evening, suddenly we saw a lot of crowd gathering in one corner. We realized that Arjun Rampal, the Bollywood superstar had come there, and all the people were running around to catch a glimpse of him. We were excited and saw him too. We wanted to get a picture clicked with him, but he was rushed inside the Gallery with a lot of security.

We finally went back to Dharampura with a day well spent at the India Art Fair.

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Poems

By Myself

When I'm by myself
And close my eyes
I'm a twin
I'm a dimple on a chin
I'm a room full of toys
I'm a squeaky noise
I'm a gospel song
I'm a song
I'm a leaf turning red
I'm a loaf of brown bread
I'm whatever I want to be
An anything I care to be
And when I open my eyes
What I care to be, is me

Name: Dhani Kumari

Class: VIII

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Simraha
(Bihar)

I can be a pal

I can be a pal by smiling at you
I can be a pal when you feel blue
I can be a pal who is honest and kind
I can be a pal when you are in a bind
I can be a pal by saying please and thank you
I can be a pal no one wants to
I can be a pal every single day
I can be your pal, what do you say?

Name: Manisha Kumari

Class: IX

Uttari Rampur, Forbesganj (Bihar)



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Red Light Despatch

Editor: Ruchira Gupta

Editorial team: Taw Nana

Publisher: Apne Aap Women Worldwide

RNI Number: DELMUL/2008/27727

Printer: India Enterprises, New Delhi

Organizing communities to end sex trafficking—every woman free, every child in school